

# **HYMNS WITH A GOSPEL MESSAGE...#2**



## **The Theology and Place of Music in Worship**

### **The people of God sing.**

- **After escaping from the Egyptians and crossing the Red Sea, the people of Israel sang a song to the Lord (Exod. 15).**
- **Singing was part of Israel's formal worship in both tabernacle and temple (1 Chron. 6:31-32, 16:42).**
- **The Psalms bear rich testimony that in joy and sorrow, in praise and lament, the faithful raise their voices in song to God.**

*And we do today, in joy and sorrow (rocking babies and at funerals), we sing!*

- **Hymn singing was practiced by Jesus and his disciples (Matt. 26:30).**
- **The Apostle Paul instructed the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3: 16-17).**
- **Music and song continue to play a vital role in the life of God's people today.**
  - ✓ Contemporary culture and modern technology bring new possibilities and new challenges to the music ministry of the church.
  - ✓ Change brings challenges; challenges bring about criticism and honest critiques...as well as a test of character. Remember...change for change sake is likely to fail; however, change to meet the needs of the church as a whole can be positive and progressive...if Christ is uplifted and man feels like he has a part in seeing growth in numbers and spiritual maturity.

**People's lives are surrounded with music—television and radio, the background music of video games, music in the shopping malls, CDs, and synthesizers.**

- ✓ *Yet much of the time music functions as "background" rather than as an opportunity for serious listening, much less participation.*
- ✓ *Much of the popular music (including popular Christian music) composed today is for performance rather than for participation.*

**The church also has greater access and has shown greater openness to a greater variety of music—such diversity is welcomed and celebrated by many churches. The pastors state, “This reflects the diversity and richness of God’s creation.”**

*However, greater variety and options in music call for greater discernment and care in planning and implementing the music ministry of the church. The people of God sing; what they sing and how they sing are important issues.*

## **The theology and place of music in Christian worship.**

- **Music is a gift of God and part of the created order.**
  - ✓ From its inception, "when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy" (Job 38:7), to its consummation, when "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them" will sing to the Lamb on the throne (Rev. 5:13), creation is musical.
  - ✓ "All nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres." Human music-making participates in the music of creation and reflects the order, beauty, and diversity of God’s creation.
- **Of all the musical instruments that may be employed in the praise of God, the human voice has priority.**
  - ✓ Other instruments are to be used primarily in the service of the singing of God's people.
  - ✓ Reformed theologian Karl Barth points out that singing is not an option for the people of God; it is one of the essential ministries of the church:
- **The Christian church sings. It is not a choral society. Its singing is not a concert. But from inner, material necessity it sings.**

- ✓ Singing is the highest form of human expression....What we can and must say quite confidently is that the church which does not sing is not the church.

And where...if it does not really sing with jubilant and joyous reverberations...but sighs and mumbles spasmodically, shamefacedly and with an ill grace, it can be at best only a troubled community which is not sure of its cause and of whose ministry and witness there can be no great expectation....

- **Singing is a ministry that belongs to all the people of God. The congregation is always the primary choir.**

- ✓ Note: The role of professional or volunteer choirs and musicians is to aid the whole people of God in their worship. While anthems or vocal and instrumental solos may be offered, they do not have to be.
- ✓ Congregational singing, however, is essential. While it is possible to be actively engaged in worship and in prayer while listening to an anthem or solo, a diet of worship which does not regularly include ample opportunity for all the members of the congregation to join in song will be impoverished worship, and the life of the church and the faith of its people will suffer.

- **Of all the art forms that may be employed in worship, singing is especially corporate.** Indeed, it is the art form most suited to expressing the church's unity in the body of Christ. Different voices, different instruments, different parts are blended to offer a single, living, and unified work of beauty.
- **The church's ministry of song is for the glory of God.** The principal direction of congregational singing is to the Lord (Ps. 96:1). Music is made first of all to the Lord and only secondarily to each other. Music should communicate and express a sense of awe and wonder in the presence of God; it should lead our thoughts toward God rather than toward ourselves.
- **Spiritual Songs should reflect a deep sense of thanksgiving, gratitude, and love for God and His work in our lives.** It can be in form of testimony or praise to the God who changed our lives or someone we know.
- **God can be glorified by beautiful sounds and spirits may be uplifted by a pleasing melody, but it is primarily the joining of the tune to a text that gives meaning to Christians' songs.**

- ✓ Not only should both text and tune glorify God and be consistent with each other, but the tune must serve the text. Music is always the servant of the Word.

**John Calvin cautioned that "we should be very careful that our ears be not more attentive to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words...Such songs as have been composed only for the sweetness and delight of the ear are unbecoming to the majesty of the church and cannot but displease God in the highest degree."**

### **The Love of God...Words by Frederick Lehman**

*The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star, And reaches to the lowest hell;  
The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win;  
His erring child He reconciled, And pardoned from his sin.*

*Refrain:  
Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure—  
The saints' and angels' song.*

*When hoary time shall pass away, And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,  
When men who here refuse to pray, On rocks and hills and mountains call,  
God's love so sure, shall still endure, All measureless and strong;  
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—The saints' and angels' song.*

*[Refrain]*

*Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade;  
To write the love of God above Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Though stretched from sky to sky.  
*[Refrain]**

### **The Scriptural verses going along with the song, The Love of God.**

***Psalm 36:7, "How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings."***

***Psalm 42:8, "By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me— a prayer to the God of my life."***

***Psalm 136:2, "Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever."***

***Romans 8:39, "...neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

***Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."***

***Ephesians 5:2, "and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."***

***2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth."***

***1 John 3:1, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."***

***Jude 1:21, "Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."***

**Frederick M. Lehman**, Frederick Lehman was the pastor who wrote the well-known hymn, "The Love of God."

- Frederick Martin Lehman, 1868-1953 Born: August 7, 1868, Mecklenburg, Schwerin, Germany. Died: February 20, 1953, Pasadena, California.
  - ✓ He came to Christ at age 11
  - ✓ Legends say that when a certain insane asylum patient passed away these words were found scribbled on his walls -

"Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made; Were every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade, To write the love of God above Would drain the ocean dry, Nor could the scroll contain the whole Though stretched from sky to sky."

### **The church's ministry of song is for the edification of God's people.**

Through congregational singing Christian faith is not only expressed; to a very real degree it is formed. Since people tend to remember the theology they sing more than the theology that is preached, a congregation's repertoire of hymns and spiritual songs is often of critical importance in shaping the faith of its people.

- ✓ Here again, ***it is the meaning of the text that is of primary importance.*** It is through the sense of the words that God's people learn of the nature and character of God and of the Christian life.

- ✓ Noting that, “*If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.* <sup>15</sup> *So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.* (1 Cor. 14:14-15, NIV).
- ✓ Other songs he wrote: The Royal Telephone and There is No Disappointment in Heaven.

### **The Royal Telephone (Words by Frederick Lehman)**

*Central's never busy, always on the line;  
You may hear from Heaven almost any time;  
'Tis a royal service, free for one and all;  
When you get in trouble, give this royal line a call.*

**Refrain:** *Telephone to glory, O what joy divine!  
I can feel the current moving on the line,  
Built by God the Father for His loved and own,  
We may talk to Jesus thru this royal telephone.*

*There will be no charges, telephone is free,  
It was built for service, just for you and me;  
There will be no waiting on this royal line,  
Telephone to glory always answers just in time.  
Refrain*

*Fail to get the answer, Satan's crossed your wire,  
By some strong delusion, or some base desire;  
Take away obstructions, God is on the throne,  
And you'll get your answer thru this royal telephone.  
Refrain*

*If your line is grounded, and connection true  
Has been lost with Jesus, tell you what to do;  
Prayer and faith and promise, mend the broken wire,  
'Till your soul is burning with the Pentecostal fire.  
Refrain*

*Carnal combinations cannot get control  
Of this line to glory, anchored in the soul;  
Storm and trial cannot disconnect the line,  
Held in constant keeping by the Father's hand divine.*

**Refrain:** *Telephone to glory, O what joy divine!  
I can feel the current moving on the line,  
Built by God the Father for His loved and own,  
We may talk to Jesus thru this royal telephone.*

**We have a direct line to God through prayer. God loves for His children to seek His guidance and wise counsel.**